

**The more you know,
the better you
will be able to
protect yourself.**

The purpose of
this pamphlet is to
inform you about
Sexually Transmitted
Diseases (STDs).

Also referred to as
Sexually Transmitted
Infections, or STIs.

If you have more questions about
HIV or other STDs, or if you would like
the number to the local health department
closest to you, contact:



**Disease Prevention Hotline
1-800-533-4148**

**Monday - Friday
8am – 5 pm**

**SIDA Español:
1-800-344-7432**



facebook.com/
diseasepreventionhotline

Sexually Transmitted Diseases



www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention

**This pamphlet has been designed for
general audiences.**

Revised 6/13

What Are STDs?

STDs refer to a group of diseases that are spread from person to person during sexual activity. They are also referred to as Sexually Transmitted Infections, or STIs.

How Are STDs Spread?

The germs that cause an STD can be spread during oral (mouth), anal, or vaginal sex. Some STDs are spread from skin to skin contact with an infected partner's genital area – not just through intercourse.

What Should You Do If You Think You Have an STD?

If you think you might have an STD, you must get medical attention right away. An STD won't go away by itself. Sometimes you might not feel sick or have any signs of infection; sometimes you might have a sore that heals or other symptoms that go away. In any case, the STD is still in your body until you get medical treatment.

STDs are very common in the United States and some are increasing – that's the bad news. The good news is that you can protect yourself from getting STDs. All STDs are preventable if you know how to protect yourself. Left untreated, some STDs can cause serious long-term health problems. A pregnant woman can pass an infection to her baby.

Read the following information carefully, and if you have any symptoms or think that you have been exposed to an STD, seek medical evaluation right away and avoid having sex.

What Else Should I Do?

It is very important that your sexual partners be told about an STD so they can be treated and so you can avoid getting infected again. Your health department can help you do this without ever telling your name.

Follow your doctor's instructions and finish all medications as directed even if you begin to feel better. Have a follow-up exam to make sure the disease treatment was effective, if your doctor has told you to do so.

- Don't have sexual intercourse until the infection is completely treated to avoid spreading the disease to others.

The only sure way to avoid getting an STD is to NOT HAVE SEX.

- **Never** share medication.
- Talk to your doctor or STD clinic if you have questions or if your symptoms start to come back.

What Symptoms Should I Look For?

Here are some of the symptoms that you might have if you are infected with an STD:

EVERYONE

- Pain or burning when you urinate.
- Any blisters, sores, ulcers, bumps, or warts on or around the sex organs or anus.
- Any burning, itching, swelling, or redness on or around the sex organs.
- Persistent flu-like symptoms such as: sore throat, tiredness, fever, aches, chills, night sweats, weight loss, or diarrhea.

FEMALES

- Any odor or unusual discharge (fluid) that comes from the vagina.
- Itching or burning around the vagina.
- Pain during sex.
- Bleeding other than during menstruation (your period).
- Pain in the lower abdominal area that doesn't go away.
- Left untreated, some STDs can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) – a very serious condition. PID can develop when untreated infections spread further into the reproductive organs. Symptoms are usually serious and, left untreated, can cause infertility or death.

Remember: Sometimes you may not have ANY symptoms whatsoever, but you might still have an STD.

MALES

- A discharge or drip (fluid) from the penis.
- Pain or soreness in the area of the testicles or rectum.

How Can I Prevent Getting an STD?

- Abstain from sex.
- If you choose to have sex, having a faithful (monogamous) relationship with one uninfected partner is the next best thing. However, if your partner is having sex with other people, you can get an STD.
- The best protection for sexually active people is to use a condom every time you have sex.
- Hepatitis A and B and some Genital Wart associated illnesses can be prevented through vaccination.

Where Can I Get Treatment?

Your doctor can identify and treat your STD. If you don't have a doctor, contact the local health department in your city or county. Most have special clinics just for STDs. You might feel embarrassed about having an STD, but try not to let this feeling stop you from getting checked-out. All information is confidential. STDs won't go away unless they are treated!

About condoms...

- USE a LATEX condom **EVERY** time you have sex! This means for vaginal, anal, AND oral sex – from start to finish.
- Non-Latex condoms are available for those with latex allergies. Non-latex condoms are made from nitrile, polyurethane, or polyisoprene.
- “Natural” membrane (lamb skin) condoms will **NOT** provide adequate protection from STDs. They contain tiny pores or holes.
- Make sure you have condoms easily available.
- Put on a new condom each time you have sex.
- Only use condoms that are new. Don't use the condom if it has passed the expiration date (look on the package!).
- Don't use the condom if the package is damaged.
- Be sure to use **ONLY WATER-BASED** lubricants (read the package!).
- Don't use lubricants that are oil-based such as petroleum jelly, cold cream, baby oil, or cooking oils of any kind. These can weaken the condom or cause it to break.
- Never re-use a condom.
- If a condom breaks or comes off during sex, STOP! – And put on a new condom.
- Do not expose condoms to heat or sunlight.
- ASK your partner about past sexual partners and STDs.

Condoms can be expected to provide different levels of protection for various STDs, depending on differences in how the diseases are transmitted. Condoms are known to provide more protection against diseases transmitted through semen or vaginal secretions, like HIV, gonorrhea, and chlamydia. They provide less protection against diseases like genital warts and herpes where transmission can occur through contact with infected skin not covered by the condom.

The “female” condom is now available.

It is a barrier method designed to prevent pregnancy and STDs

Remember: You and your partner should agree to use a condom **BEFORE** you start having sex. Condom use has been proven to reduce the risk of getting HIV, hepatitis B, herpes, gonorrhea, genital ulcers, pelvic inflammatory disease, chlamydia, syphilis, and other infections.

**Call the Virginia Disease Prevention Hotline at
1-800-533-4148**

**or e-mail to hiv-stdhotline@vdh.virginia.gov
for more information.**

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Disease	What Are the Symptoms?	How is it Spread?	Treatment
AIDS & HIV Infection	Symptoms might show up several months to years after infection. Persistent symptoms might include: fever, night sweats, unexplained weight loss, diarrhea, tiredness, swollen lymph glands, nausea. Often, there are no symptoms with early HIV infection, but some may have flu-like symptoms such as rash, fever, sore throat, or swollen lymph glands.	HIV is passed through exchange of blood , semen , or vaginal fluids with an infected person. This happens most often through sex and sharing of needles . HIV can also be spread to an infant from the mother before or during birth or through breast milk .	There is NO CURE for HIV. There is a test to tell if you have HIV infection. There are medications that help to slow down HIV and treat the infections caused by a weakened immune system. HIV testing is recommended if you have any other STD. Your sex and/or needle sharing partners should be tested.
Chlamydia	Symptoms might appear 7-21 days after infection: a discharge from your penis or vagina, pain or burning during urination, pain in the lower abdominal area. Often you have NO signs of chlamydia!	Sexual contact (vaginal, anal, or oral) with someone who has chlamydia. It can also be spread to an infant from the mother during birth.	Cured with antibiotic medications prescribed by a doctor. It will not go away until it is treated. Your sexual partner(s) must also be treated. Take all medication as prescribed.
Crabs (Pubic Lice)	Signs show up immediately or a few days after infestation: intense itching in genital area, visual evidence of crabs.	Close personal contact with someone who has crabs. It might also be spread by sharing of personal items (such as clothing, towels, bedding, etc.) that are infested with crabs or crab eggs.	Cured with prescription and over-the-counter medicated creams, lotions, or shampoos. Follow the directions carefully! Important to thoroughly clean bedding, towels, clothing, etc. at time of treatment.
Genital Warts (HPV)	May take 3-6 months for wart(s) to appear, sometimes cannot be seen at all. Small, bumpy growth(s) on or around sex organs or anus, varying in color & size. Can be inside the vagina.	Skin-to-skin sexual contact (vaginal, oral, anal) with a person who has genital warts. They can also be spread to an infant from the mother during birth.	There is NO CURE for HPV. A doctor can treat genital warts, but they can grow back. Annual PAP tests can detect HPV in women. Some experts recommend yearly anal PAP tests if you have receptive anal intercourse or are HIV-positive. There is now a vaccine to prevent some kinds of HPV infection.
Gonorrhea	Symptoms might appear 2-10 days after infection: pain or burning during urination, discharge from the penis or vagina, severe sore throat; sometimes there are NO signs of gonorrhea! Males are more likely to have symptoms than females.	Sexual contact (vaginal, anal, or oral) with someone who has gonorrhea. It can also be spread to an infant from the mother during birth.	Gonorrhea can be cured with antibiotic medications prescribed by a doctor. Your sex partner(s) must also be tested/treated. Take all medication as prescribed.
Hepatitis A (HAV)	Symptoms appear suddenly 15-50 days after infection (avg = 4 weeks): fever, loss of appetite, dark-colored urine, nausea and abdominal discomfort, followed within a few days by jaundice.	Can be spread through oral-to-anal sexual contact and through swallowing contaminated water and food. The virus is found in the feces of an infected person.	HAV does not become chronic like other Hepatitis infections. The illness usually resolves within 2 weeks, although 15% of cases can relapse repeatedly and take up to a year to recover. A vaccine is available to prevent HAV infection.
Hepatitis B (HBV)	Symptoms might appear 45-180 days after infection (avg = 11 weeks): tiredness, vomiting, stomach pain, loss of appetite/weight, aching muscles/joints, fever, nausea, diarrhea, yellowing of skin or eyes (jaundice), dark-colored urine. You may only feel one or a couple of these symptoms or none at all.	Contact with blood, semen, or vaginal fluids of a person who has Hepatitis B. Mainly spread through sexual contact, but also can be spread through needle sharing and to an infant from the mother during birth.	HBV is treatable with medications. Treatment can help control liver damage, make symptoms less severe and prevent liver cancer. A vaccine is available to prevent HBV infection.
Hepatitis C (HCV)	Symptoms might appear 14-180 days after infection (avg = 8 weeks): symptoms are similar to Hepatitis B (above).	Contact with blood, semen, or vaginal fluids of a person who has Hepatitis C. Mainly spread through needle sharing, but also can be spread through sexual contact and to an infant from the mother during birth.	There is NO CURE for HCV. About 75-85% of people who get HCV develop chronic (long-term) infection. There are treatment options that can help control liver damage and make symptoms less severe, and in some cases, eliminate the virus. Treatment is complex and requires multiple drugs and careful monitoring.
Herpes (HSV)	Symptoms might appear 2-12 days after infection: pain or burning during urination, flu-like symptoms. In a few days, small red bumps appear which then turn into fluid-filled blisters. Blisters dry and heal in 1-3 weeks and sometimes turn into ulcers. Ulcers can be very painful and often there are swollen lymph nodes (glands). There is usually pain, burning, or itching during this time. You still have herpes even after blisters have healed. Blisters might come back (these are called “recurrences”). Sometimes you have no symptoms.	Sexual contact (oral, anal, vaginal) with someone who has herpes. Can also be spread by kissing or touching the body parts that are infected. The most infectious time is during an “outbreak” (when blisters are present). Herpes can also be spread when no blisters are present. It can also be spread to an infant from the mother during birth.	There is NO CURE for herpes. Some prescription medications can help reduce the duration and frequency of outbreaks and make them less painful.
Non-Gonococcal Urethritis (NGU)	Symptoms might appear 2-21 days after infection: a discharge from your penis or vagina, pain or burning during urination, pain in the lower abdominal area. Often you have NO signs of infection!	Sexual contact (vaginal, anal, or oral) with someone who has an infection. It can also be spread to an infant from the mother during birth.	Cured with antibiotic medications prescribed by a doctor. It will not go away until it is treated. Your sexual partner(s) must also be treated. Take all medication as prescribed.
Syphilis	1st stage: 1-12 weeks after infection, a painless sore (chancre) appears at the site of infection. Can be anywhere in genital area, inside vagina, rectum, or mouth. A chancre will heal, but you still have syphilis. 2nd stage: 2-12 weeks after the chancre has healed, skin rashes and flu-like symptoms may appear. The symptoms will go away, but the disease remains and can get worse later. 3rd stage: called “latency”(no symptoms during this time). After the “latency” period, infectious sores may return, internal organs may be damaged. The disease remains in the body if not treated.	Sexual contact (vaginal, anal, or oral) with someone who has syphilis. It can also be spread to an infant from the mother before and during birth.	Syphilis can be cured with prescription antibiotic medication . It is important to have a follow-up exam to make sure the treatment has cured the disease. Left untreated, the disease can lead to very severe health problems and even death. Your sex partner(s) must be examined and treated if infected.
Vaginitis (Yeast Infections, Trichomoniasis, Bacterial Vaginitis)	Sometimes there are no symptoms. Itching, pain, burning in vagina. Unusual discharge from vagina that might smell.	Can be spread during sexual contact. Men can carry germs without symptoms.	Yeast: Treated with prescription or over-the-counter medications (pills, creams). Sex partners do not usually need to be treated. Trich: Can be treated with medication prescribed by your doctor. Your partner may require treatment as well. Bacterial Vaginitis: Can be cured with antibiotic medications prescribed by your doctor. Sex partners do not usually need to be treated.